



## **LANL Medal recipient George Cowan, 90, presents memoirs at talk, book signing February 25 in Los Alamos**

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LOS ALAMOS, New Mexico, February 17, 2010—Scientist, businessman, and philanthropist George Cowan will talk about his new book, *Manhattan Project to the Santa Fe Institute*, at 5:15 p.m. February 25 at the Bradbury Science Museum in downtown Los Alamos.

Following his talk, the retired Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist and recipient of LANL's highest honor, the Los Alamos National Laboratory Medal, will sign copies of the book in the Otowi Station Bookstore and Science Museum Shop.

Cowan's autobiography represents an intellectually rigorous account of science and its place in society and public policy over the past seventy years. Admitting that the book could have been much longer, Cowan, who celebrated his 90th birthday on February 15, said, "I have a feeling about old people who go on and on about their experiences. I didn't want to bore anyone."

The book highlights key moments and turning points in his 40-year career at LANL.

The author tells of how, in 1949, he helped identify debris collected from the first Soviet atomic-bomb test. "My team and I analyzed the debris, and we were the first to go to Washington to convince President Harry S. Truman that the Russians had indeed tested an atomic bomb, something that he believed was still years away," he said. In the course of his work, he and his team discovered several new chemical elements—discoveries that, due to the classified nature of the research, would not be made public until years later.

By 1956, Cowan had become known as one of the world's foremost experts on nuclear weapons diagnostics. He served as the associate head of LANL's Test Division and associate director for research, was named senior laboratory fellow, and earned numerous awards and honors including the E.O. Lawrence and Enrico Fermi Awards. Although he always considered weapons testing his "bread and butter work," he also pursued a number of outside interests: he helped establish Los Alamos National Bank and served on the boards of the Los Alamos Hospital, the National Center for Genome Resources, the Los Alamos Public Utilities Board, the Los Alamos Concert Association, the Santa Fe Opera, and the Santa Fe Opera Foundation. He credits his mother with his life-long passion for opera. "One of my earliest memories is sitting on her lap during a performance of *Aida*," he said.

In the mid-1980s, he assembled a group of scientists from various disciplines to form the Santa Fe Institute. Since the early 1990s, Cowan has pursued a new interest in

psychology and neuroscience to gain a deeper understanding of patterns of human behavior. “I’m interested in measuring the richness of the ‘library’ that your brain carries around,” he explained.

The Bradbury Science Museum is located at 15th Street and Central Avenue. For more information, call the museum at 667-4444 or visit <http://www.lanl.gov/museum/>.

**Los Alamos National Laboratory**

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